

Who Should Get an HIV Test?

What is HIV?

HIV is a virus. It weakens your body's ability to fight off sickness. HIV is the virus that can cause AIDS. A person with HIV may not know he or she has it. HIV can pass from one person to another through blood, semen ("cum"), vaginal fluids and breast milk.

What is the test?

The only way to know whether you have HIV is by having an HIV test. It is a blood test. A small amount of blood is taken from your arm and sent to a laboratory to look for HIV antibodies. You will get the results in one to two weeks.

HIV antibodies are made when a person is infected with HIV. This test looks for HIV antibodies to learn if someone is infected.

This is not a test for AIDS. It only means that you have been infected with HIV and can develop AIDS in the future.

Should I be tested?

HIV is found in blood, semen ("cum"), vaginal fluids and breast milk. The virus can be passed to others through any of these body fluids. For HIV to pass from one person to another, the infected person's blood, semen or vaginal fluids must get in the body of another person. The HIV virus can enter through the vagina, penis, anus, mouth, or a cut in the skin.

You may need the HIV test if now, or in the past.....

- ▶ You received blood or blood products before 1985.
- ▶ You have had more than one sex partner.
- ▶ You shoot drugs.
- ▶ You have sex with someone else who shoots drugs.
- ▶ You have unsafe sex (sex **without** a "rubber"/condom) with someone who has the HIV virus.
- ▶ You are pregnant or considering pregnancy and you had sex without a condom/"rubber" with someone who may be infected or shoots drugs.

- ▶You share tattoo or body piercing needles.

What does a negative HIV test result mean?

You are probably not infected with HIV. However, since it takes the body between six weeks and six months to develop antibodies to HIV, you may test negative, even if you are infected. If you had unsafe sex (did not use a "rubber"/condom) or shared needles or "works" within the last 6 months you may need to be tested again.

Remember, until you are sure of your HIV status, protect yourself and others from HIV.

A negative test does not mean that you are safe from the virus. Anyone can get HIV. If you take risks with sex or needles, you may get HIV in the future.

What does a positive HIV test result mean?

You are infected with HIV. This does not mean that you have AIDS.

You can give HIV to other people through unsafe sex or sharing drug needles.

You can pass HIV to your baby during pregnancy, birth or through breastfeeding.

There are programs in Montana for you if you test positive for HIV. These programs can help people with HIV stay healthy. They include medicines to help prevent infections and medicines to slow the spread of the HIV virus. Call your local health department about these programs.

Telling the people you have had sex or have shared needles with about your positive test can be difficult, so there are counselors who will help you do this.

How can I avoid getting HIV?

Not having sex and not sharing needles or "works" are the surest ways to prevent getting HIV. There are other ways to reduce your risk of getting HIV.

Protect yourself if you have sex:

- ▶Use a new condom each time you have oral, anal or vaginal sex. Latex or polyurethane is best because HIV can pass through lambskin or natural condoms.
- ▶Use water-based lubricants, like KY jelly, **NOT** oils or lotions, like Vaseline that can cause a condom to break more easily.

Protect yourself if you use drugs or alcohol:

- ▶Never share your needles or "works" to shoot drugs.
- ▶Clean needles and "works" with bleach, leave it sit 30 seconds, repeat 3 times, then rinse with water 3 times with every use.

Mixing sex, drugs, and alcohol is risky. If you are drunk or high it is harder to make good decisions about having sex.

You can't get HIV from casual contact, such as hugging, kissing, sharing kitchen utensils, contact with toilets, or insect bites. You can't get HIV from donating blood.

Where can I get the HIV test?

Most County Health Departments and Family Planning Clinics in Montana provide HIV tests and counseling. Doctors and clinics may do HIV tests too.

2 ways to get an HIV test.

You can choose the kind of test that you are most comfortable with:

ANONYMOUS

You may want to get an HIV test without giving your name. You don't have to give your name when you get a test at the places listed on the back. Results can only be given to you in person and you are the only person who will know your results.

CONFIDENTIAL

You can also get an HIV test confidentially, but your name will be recorded on your medical forms. Confidential tests are offered in many doctor's offices and clinics in Montana.

Find out before you go for an HIV test whether your name or just a code number will be used.

The Consent Form

You decide whether or not to be tested. If you choose to be tested, you will be asked to sign a consent form before being tested. If you do not get a consent form, ask for one.

For more information without giving your name, call:

Montana HIV/AIDS Hotline - 800-233-6668 - Call anytime.

National AIDS Hotline - 800-342-AIDS - Call anytime.

Test Sites Where You Don't Have to Give Your Name
(Here is where the HIV Prevention Sites will be listed)